Claims

1. A remote control apparatus, comprising:

a user input module;

a wireless transmitter module coupled to the user input module, the transmitter operable in response to user operation of the user input module to transmit a remote control signal corresponding to the user operation; and

a speech module coupled to the user input module, the speech module operable to generate a speech signal indicative of the user operation.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, additionally comprising a controller electrically connected to the user input module, the transmitter module, and the speech module.

3. The apparatus of claim 2, additionally comprising a selector electrically connected to the controller, the selector operable to select an operational mode of the apparatus.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, in which the operational modes comprise an operational mode in which operation of the transmitter is inhibited.

5. The apparatus of claim 3, in which the operational modes comprise an operational mode in which operation of the speech module is inhibited.

6. The apparatus of claim 3, in which the operational modes comprise an operational mode in which one of the modules requires an additional user input before operating, and the other module operates without additional input from the user.

7. The apparatus of claim 1, additionally comprising a speech transducer connected to receive the speech signal.

8. A method of remotely controlling an appliance, the method comprising:

receiving user input; and

in response to the user input:

wirelessly transmitting a remote control signal corresponding to the user input, and

generating a speech signal indicative of the user input.

9. The method of claim 8, additionally comprising selecting an operational mode of the controlling.

10. The method of claim 9, additionally comprising inhibiting the transmitting in the selected operational mode.

11. The method of claim 9, additionally comprising inhibiting the generating of speech in the selected operational mode.

12. The method of claim 8, additionally comprising uttering audible speech in response to the speech signal.

13. The method of claim 12, additionally comprising:

selecting an operational mode of the controlling; and

in the selected operational mode:

receiving additional user input after the uttering, and

triggering the transmitting by the additional user input.

14. Apparatus for remotely controlling an appliance, the apparatus comprising:

a user input module;

a wireless transmitter module;

a speech module; and

control means, coupled to the user input module, the transmitter and the speech module, for receiving user input from the user input module and, in response to the user input, for causing the transmitter to transmit a remote control signal corresponding the user input and for causing the speech module to generate a speech signal indicative of the user operation.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, additionally comprising a speech transducer connected to the control means to receive the speech signal.

16. The apparatus of claim 14, in which the user input device comprises a selector operable to select an operational mode of the apparatus.

17. The apparatus of claim 16, in which, in the selected operational mode, the control means is additionally for inhibiting the transmitter.

18. The apparatus of claim 16, in which, in the selected operational mode, the control means is additionally for inhibiting the speech module.

19. The apparatus of claim 16, in which, in the selected operational mode, the control means is additionally awaiting an additional user input from the user input module before it causes the transmitter to transmit the control signal.

20. A remote control apparatus, comprising:

an array of user-operable switches;

an infrared transmitter;

an audio transducer; and

electronic storage;

wherein:

associated with each of the switches and stored in the electronic storage is a respective speech signal and a respective control signal capable of controlling an appliance, and

operating one of the switches causes the speech signal associated therewith to be uttered by the audio transducer to provide aural confirmation as to the switch that was operated, and causes the control signal associated therewith to be transmitted by the infrared transmitter.

21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the uttering of the speech signal and the transmitting of the control signal do not happen concurrently.

22. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein one of the user-operable switches can inhibit the speech signal.

23. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein one of the user-operable switches can inhibit the transmitting of the control signal.

24. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein one of the control signals is capable of controlling a television.

25. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the audio transducer comprises at least one of a speaker and an earphone.

26. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the said control signals are capable of controlling more than one type of appliance.